



2016

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES**

STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT

LIVING COUNCIL

MISSION

To make independent living a reality for Montanans with disabilities by promoting and practicing a philosophy of consumer control, development of peer relationships and peer role models, self-determination, self-help, equal access, and advocacy in order to maximize independence, integration, and full inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream Montana.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) members are advocates for the independent living (IL) needs of Montanans with disabilities. The SILC promotes the IL philosophy that people with disabilities have the same civil rights, options, and control over choices in their own lives as do people without disabilities. The SILC develops, monitors, reviews and evaluates the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) every three years, writes an annual report to the Governor describing the status and effectiveness of IL services in Montana, and reviews and analyzes the satisfaction of the consumers served by the Centers for Independent Living (CIL). With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), additional focus is being made on transitioning people with disabilities from nursing homes and institutions into independent living facilities. Additional attention is being directed toward youth with disabilities transitioning from high school into adult life.

CURRENT SILC MEMBERS

Monique Casbeer, Missoula, Chair; Rosemary Hughes, Missoula, Vice Chair; Lori Gaustad, Billings, Secretary; Mary Olson, Missoula; Michelle Williamson, Ronan; Tom Osborn, Great Falls; Karen Underwood, Laurel; Allison Smith, Lockwood; Tracey Carlyon, Butte; Joseph Moll, Great Falls; Trinity Martel, Missoula.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

There are four Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in the State of Montana which incorporate and make active the SILC philosophy and mission. The CILs provide training to increase self-advocacy skills of consumers which is interdependent with systems advocacy. This is done through direct services which identify barriers for persons with disabilities and through systems advocacy which promotes the removal of those barriers. In 2015 the CILs reported 1080 persons with disabilities received General Fund and Part B services and activities. The four CILs in Montana are:

Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT), Billings
Montana Independent Living Project (MILP), Helena, with branch offices in Bozeman and Butte
North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS), Black Eagle, with a branch office in Glasgow
Summit Independent Living Center Inc. (Summit), Missoula, with branch offices in Hamilton, Kalispell and Ronan

Number of People Served with State-Appropriated Money in 2016

Total = 1213 (General Fund = 645, and Federal Part B = 568)

Served by Disability Category

Mental/Emotional/Cognitive Disability

Physical Disability

Sensory Disability

Other Disability



Most Frequent Services Requested

- Information and Referral
- Advocacy Services
- IL Skills Training and Life Skills Training
- Housing, Home Modifications, and Shelter Services

Most Frequent Community Change Achievements Experienced by Those Seeking Services

- Transportation
- Disability Awareness
- Health Care Issues
- Legislative Collaboration
- Accessibility

(Examples of these achievements are demonstrated in the CIL narratives below.)

SILC Activities

- In collaboration with the CILs wrote the new State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).
- Began researching the possibility of becoming a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in order to better implement the autonomy the SILC has through WIOA
- Participated in webinars presented by Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU), Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL), and other disability organizations for ongoing education on disability issues.
- Participated in the Disability Employability Conference held in May in Great Falls,
- Continued to maximize Community Outreach/ Education task force efforts to increase community inclusion and awareness of Independent Living Services.
- Continued participation in the Montana Youth Leadership Forum and Montana Youth Transitions Conference.
- Participated in Money Follows the Person and Community First Choice Option activities.
- Worked with Helena Joining Community Forces to promote resources and services to Service Members, Veterans, and their families.
- Developed and conducted an annual Consumer Satisfaction Survey to gather information on services provided to persons with disabilities.

Centers for Independent Living Activities

The four centers for independent living (CILs) continue to be actively involved in a number of systems change and advocacy issues throughout the state. Through the Montana CIL Action Alert System; <http://cqrcengage.com/summitilc/>, they send out information pertinent to those interested in disability issues. They also host a website promoting universal design for visitable housing; <http://www.visitablemt.org/>. The CILs' Legislative and Self-Determination Task forces work on ways to advocate for more inclusion of people with disabilities in their communities by promoting ADA compliance, public transportation, home and community based services, personal care attendant wage and hour issues, and more.

In early December each CIL was contracted to conduct career counseling and information and referral interviews (CCIR) with workers employed at sub-minimum wages under a Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) section 14(c) certificate which a number of employer/providers hold in Montana. These interviews are required under WIOA section 511 (34 CFR 397.40 – 397.50). Workers will be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation and encouraged to seek competitive integrated employment.

Additional activities done by the individual CILs are as follows:

Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT): A peer mentor from LIFTT decided she had achieved many of her goals and had gained self-confidence for employment and other areas of her life which enabled her to move on to seek employment in the community and to focus on her teen aged daughter who was struggling with some mental health issues. She has reported back to LIFTT that she has reached some successful benchmarks with her daughter and is very grateful to LIFTT for the support, education, and self-empowerment she received while being there.

LIFTT continues to host a weekly Housing Help open house to assist individuals with rental applications, advocacy, and other issues related to housing. They also work with Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and other partners to seek solutions to housing issues such as referrals to the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, moving people from institutions to community based housing, and to promote better housing options for people with disabilities.

Montana Independent Living Project (MILP): From our Butte Office: Butte's IL Specialist worked with a young woman from Butte High School through the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program at Vocational Rehabilitation. She was able to match the woman up with a work experience at the SW Montana Community Health Center. Upon graduation, the young woman was hired as a permanent full time employee. This may not have been possible without the support of MILP and the Pre-ETS program.

From our Helena Office: Nursing Home Transition-Community Living: One of our Helena Self-Direct Specialist's received a referral from a Skilled nursing/rehab facility on behalf of a social worker for an individual that suffered an AVM (arteriovenous malformation/Blood vessel abnormality) in 2015 which resulted in a craniotomy. Her mobility and overall condition was further complicated with a CVA/stroke, significant left side deficiency and chronic nerve pain. She spent some time at the Swedish Hospital in Seattle and was transferred closer to home to begin working on her rehab. MILP and the CFC-SDPAS program has been able to assist in the transition into the community and she is now living independently with her son. Although the transition on its own is notable, what is most exciting and remarkable are the possibilities and doors that have opened for both her and her family. She is hopeful and excited for the future. We are just beginning the next phase of her gaining full independence and transitioning to a home of her own by building the supports to allow for this achievement.

MILP also provided pre-employment transition services through its Green Corps Project. Eight youth received soft skills training, learned about careers, and were provided a work experience in landscaping, helping to beautify the area around the Great Northern Town Center in Helena.

From our Bozeman Office: One of our Bozeman IL Specialist's assisted an older adult who was being evicted from home. She coordinated with the Social Security office, HRDC, his landlord, and the OPA office to secure his housing and provide income going forward. MILP believes this gentleman would have ended up in an institution or homeless had he not gotten support services in place.

North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS): NCILS continues to promote services to youth with disabilities, competitive integrated employment, advocacy, and community involvement. They work closely with the Montana Youth Transitions Project to bring together youth, educators, providers, and employers to help youth successfully transition from high school to post-secondary school life, whether it be into higher education or a career. This year's Youth Transitions Conference was at full capacity with nearly 400 participants.

NCILS leads the way in its work with providers, employers, and people with disabilities to promote competitive integrated employment. It is working with holders of FLSA 14(c) certificates to find equitable solutions to moving their employees working at sub-minimum wage into jobs that pay minimum wage or better and are competitive and fully integrated in the way that people without disabilities are employed. As with the other CILs, NCILS recently signed a contract with VRBS to begin conducting CCIR interviews with those employed at sub-minimum wage.

NCILS also hosts a monthly "Meet your Legislator" events in Great Falls with bring together people with disabilities and others in the community with concerns about disability issues and their local legislators to discuss these issues. Recently local officials were also invited to participate in these events.

Summit Independent Living Center (Summit): Although Summit provides services throughout western Montana, the services it provides under the General Fund and Part B grants are mostly done in Ravalli County. Currently Summit has 15 active peers in Ravalli County who meet monthly to plan peer activities and review Summit services, activities, upcoming events, and important disability information. One of these Hamilton area peers participates in Toastmasters to improve his public speaking and presentation skills in order to become a more effective leader.

Summit has also been actively involved in working with the Hamilton community to implement a new ordinance to enforce accessible parking regulations and to improve the availability of accessible parking spaces at businesses throughout Hamilton. In June Summit staff had the opportunity to present this new parking lot accessibility ordinance to the Hamilton City Council for the first time.

Also in June Summit staff completed the last of 42 transition classes at Hamilton High School for students with disabilities with individual education plans (IEP). Topics in these classes included Building Advocacy, Leadership Skills, Soft Skills, and two classes on Building Communication Skills through Improv. One of these was concerned with basic communication skills the other was on building communication skills in the workplace. In addition to Summit staff participation in these classes presentations were made by Hamilton Job Service office, Vocational Rehabilitation, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Bitterroot College, the Bitterroot Financial Education Coalitions and several others.